

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 (ISO) W
-----041297 030326Z /66

R 021340Z DEC 77
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9805
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

S E C R E T JERUSALEM 2021

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, XF, IS, EG, SA, JO
SUBJECT: WEST BANK ATTEMPTS TO MODERATE PLO LINE

1. IN MEETING DECEMBER 1, WITH CONGEN OFFICER, RAMALLAH LAWYER
AZIZ SHIHADDEH OUTLINED HIS PLAN TO INVOLVE PALESTINIANS IN
PEACE PROCESS AND ASKED FOR US ASSISTANCE.

2. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, SHIHADDEH WAS ONE OF FEW
WEST BANKERS WHO ACCEPTED DAYAN'S INVITATION TO MEET
SECSTATE DURING AUGUST VISIT. A CHRISTIAN AND A REPUTABLE
INDEPENDENT, SHIHADDEH'S OFTEN ORIGINAL AND LOGICAL VIEWS
DO NOT USUALLY REFLECT A BROAD SPECTRUM OF WEST BANK
SHINKING.

3. SHIHADDEH BEGAN WITH ASSUMPTION THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVES
HAVE FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED WEST BANK EXPECTATIONS. WHERE
ONCE THE OCCUPATION'S END AND PEACE WERE DISTANT POSSIBILITIES,
SADAT HAS CREATED A HISTORIC POSSIBILITY FOR A RELATIVELY

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QUICK SOLUTION. PALESTINIANS MUST RISE TO THE HISTORIC
CHALLENGE, SHIHADDEH BELIEVES.

4. FIRST OPTION - IT IS AT LEAST CONCEIVABLE THAT YASSER
ARAFAT ENJOYS ENOUGH STATUS TO TURN THE PLO 180 DEGREES
AND, FIRST, HAVE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL RENOUNCE
ANTI-ZIONIST ARTICLES IN PALESTINIAN NATIONAL GOVENANT

AND, SECOND, OFFER PUBLICALLY PLO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL IN EXCHANGE FOR ISRAELI RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. TO DO SO, ARAFAT WOULD, IN EFFECT, JUMP FROM HIS CRUMBLING POWER BASE IN THE DIASPORA TO A MODERATE POWER BASE ON THE WEST BANK.

5. SECOND OPTION - SHOULD ARAFAT REFUSE, THE PLO MUST STEP ASIDE AND GIVE NON-PLO PALESTINIANS A CHANCE TO ACHIEVE WHATEVER THEY CAN IN THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS. IN THEORY, THE PLO COULD THEN RETAIN ITS REVOLUTIONARY PURITY AND THE BARGAINING CHIP OF COMPLETE REJECTION OF ISRAEL. (IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, IN WHICH SHIHADDEH WOULD NO DOUBT LIKE TO PARTICIPATE, PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION IN STAGES OR A PERES SOLUTION INVOLVING ISRAELI-WEST BANK-JORDANIAN CONFEDERATION WOULD BE REALISTIC PALESTINIAN GOALS, ACCORDING TO SHIHADDEH.)

6. MOVING THE PLO. TO MOVE THE PLO TO ACCEPT EITHER OF HIS OPTIONS, SHIHADDEH WOULD ENLIST SAUDI ARABIA'S KING KHALAD OR PRINCE FAHD WHO ARE BOTH MODERATE AND ENJOY THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL PARTIES. SHIHADDEH CLAIMS A FRIEND IN LONDON WHO ONCE SERVED AS FAHD'S ADVISOR WILL ASSIST IN HIS EFFORTS.

7. CONGEN OFFICER SUGGESTED THAT SHIHADDEH, GIVEN HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH ISRAELIS, MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST MAN TO
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PRESENT SUCH A PROPOSAL TO THE PLO. SHIHADDEH RESPONDED THAT NO ONE ELSE WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY PERSUASIVE AND, FURTHERMORE, HE HAD RECEIVED INDICATIONS FROM OUTSIDE THAT THE PLO HAD, IN FACT, APPROVED HIM AS A POSSIBLE NON-PLO DELEGATE TO GENEVA. MOREOVER, SHIHADDEH POINTED OUT HE HAD NOT, REPEAT NOT, BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SADAT VISIT EITHER AT LOD AIRPORT OR IN JERUSALEM. SHIHADDEH DISMISSED THE MAYORS AS NOT HAVING ENOUGH INITIATIVE. HE SAID HE HAD SOUNDED OUT SOME OTHER INDEPENDENTS WHO SUPPORTED HIM, BUT HE HAD NOT TALKED WITH HIKMAT AL MASRI.

8. PASSPORT PROBLEMS. FOR SOME TIME, SHIHADDEH HAS BEEN FORBIDDEN BY THE GOJ TO TRAVEL TO AMMAN AND HE LACKS A JORDANIAN PASSPORT. HE HAS ASKED WHETHER THE USG MIGHT DISCREETLY INTERVENE ON HIS BEHALF TO REMEDY THIS. CONGEN OFFICER REPLIED THAT HE WOULD CERTAINLY REPORT SHIHADDEH'S PROPOSAL, BUT THAT --IN THE PAST--THE USG HAD KEPT HANDS OFF SUCH MATTERS.

9. COMMENT: WE NOTE SHIHADDEH'S VIEWS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THOSE OF ANWAR KHATIB AND RASHED SHAWA REPORTED SEPTTEL. WHILE WE AGREE WITH SHIHADDEH THAT WEST BANK'S PALESTINIANS, IN THEIR

PRESENT MOOD, WOULD SUPPORT PLO MODERATION WE SUSPECT ARAFAT IS TOO WEAK AND TOO DEPENDENT ON SYRIA TO ACCEPT HIS FIRST OPTION. WE ALSO WONDER WHETHER THE SAUDI ARABIAN LEADERSHIP IS BOLD ENOUGH TO USE ITS UNDENIABLE INFLUENCE IN AN INTER-PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SADAT'S REPORTED STATEMENT ON WEST BANKERS HE MET IN JERUSALEM BEING THE TRUE REPRESENTATIVES AND DAYAN'S STATEMENT GOI WOULD NEGOTIATE ONLY WITH PALESTINIANS FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES MAY MEAN AN EVENTUAL ROLE FOR THE LIKES OF SHEHADEH. HOWEVER, THIS IS DOUBTFUL AT PRESENT GIVEN HIS ALMOST COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE (I.E. ISOLATION).

10. WITH SUCH FORMER OPPONENTS AS NABLUS' MAYOR SHAKA' BEING RECEIVED BY THE KING WITH OPEN ARMS, WE WONDER
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WHETHER AMMAN WOULD AGREE WITH US THAT SHIHADEH'S PAST DIFFERENCES WITH THE GOJ MIGHT NO LONGER BE AN OBSTACLE TO HIS TRAVEL THROUGH AMMAN AND/OR ON A JORDANIAN PASSPORT. IF SO, IS THERE ANYTHING WE COULD DO TOWARD THIS
END?
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WEST BANK, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JERUSA02021
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770448-0877
Format: TEL
From: JERUSALEM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197712101/aaaadhol.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a5d8cefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 105835
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WEST BANK ATTEMPTS TO MODERATE PLO LINE
TAGS: PBOR, XF, IS, EG, SA, JO, PLO, (SHIHADDEH, AZIZ)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a5d8cefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009